The

Ballarat Naturalist

April 2002

Antechinus sp.

President's Report for the year 2001-2002.

Whether it is due to my increased involvement in the Club's program I'm not sure, but I feel we've had a busier year than previously with more activities and an increased membership. Certainly there is a great buzz of conversation at our meetings, reflecting the healthy state of our Club.

At the last AGM Brian Andrews became President, but died suddenly at the end of May after battling myeloma for 9 years. (see July 2001 Newsletter). I was appointed by the committee to fill the casual vacancy.

It has been most encouraging this year to see our membership rise to 56 with 30-40 members attending the Friday meetings and between 5 and 25 venturing out on the excursions. We publish 60 copies of the newsletter each month (edited by Caroi Hall), enabling visitors and other clubs to receive copies, and for occasional external distribution.

Members have represented the Club at other functions - Greg Binns spoke to the Blind Creek P.A. about Winter Swamp, and I attended an excellent leadership seminar run for environmental groups by the Creswick Landcare Centre. We were invited back to Creswick to celebrate the International Year of Volunteers and were presented with a Certificate acknowledging the Club's contribution to environmental projects. In July members participated in tree-planting at the newly developed North Gardens Wetland; at this time the plaque commemorating the 25th anniversary of the now defunct Western District FNCA was moved to the island in the centre.

The year's syllabus included talks on Cinnamon Fungus and local orchids, the basics of geology, and the biology of raptors, antechinus and the Growling Grass Frog. Travellers entertained us with tales of wildlife in various part of Australia, the Galapagos Islands and Britain. The Stella Bedggood Lecture by Prof. I. Plimer on *The History of the World in 45 Minutes* was a stimulating and informative session which

presented the latest ideas on plate tectonics, evolution and extinction.

Blue Flax Lily
(Wilson)

Excursions took us to the Brisbane Ranges and to local geological features; we appreciated the rehabilitation of the Yarrowee River and saw the massed waders and waterfowl at the Werribee Treatment Plant. In Creswick we were given some insight into the sociological aspects of the goldmining era. A farm study at Skipton showed how European concepts of land use can be integrated with the natural characteristics of land systems. Inverleigh Common and local native gardens were visited.

In March of 2001 six members took part in the VFNCA camp-out at Rawson, enjoying the scenery of Mt. St. Gwinear, the old railway and township of Walhalla, and Jean Galbraith's garden in Morwell. At this meeting our application for an interest-free loan for the publication of the "Ballarat Bushland Book" was approved.

We returned to Apollo Bay for our annual camp-out in June, feeling that there were still possibilities to explore after last year's visit. Fifteen members under John Mildren's genial leadership enjoyed the beaches, cliffs, waterfalls and bush of the Otway coastline and hinterland. Three members attended the VFNCA Spring camp-out at Hall's Gap in October, while four of us represented the Club at the opening of the Ted Errey Circuit in the Brisbane Ranges.

As well as the scheduled program, the BBB sub-committee (Carol Hall, John Gregurke, Greg Binns, Pat Murphy, Ken Hammond) led mid-month excursions to survey locations proposed for inclusion in the book. The group also held monthly meetings to review progress and club members were involved in the writing of site descriptions, proof-reading and the provision of slides and prints for illustrations. I'd like to acknowledge the efforts of Frank Harrap regarding bird nomenclature and of Pat Murphy in the ever-changing area of plant taxonomy. John and I typed up the site descriptions, Greg wrote an introduction and researched publishing requirements and I drew the mapwork.

Spot-tailed Quoll
Hyett & Shaw

Preparations are under way to organise the VFNCA camp-out which we are hosting in October; a dinner will be held at that time to mark the 50th anniversary of the Club and to launch the book.

And what of the Lake Wendouree swans? After we had assisted Ken Kraaijeveld (Ph.D. student, Uni. of Melbourne Dept. of Zoology) for two years in his studies on the birds' courtship and parenting behaviour, Ken spent the last half of 2001 writing up his results. John and Elaine Gregurke were able to attend his final presentation at Melbourne University and we received a copy of his work in which he acknowledged the assistance of Brian, Kevin and Joan Andrews, John and myself. The research Ken initiated is continuing for the moment under Raoul Mulder

but at a less intense level. Ken and his wife have since returned to Europe.

In September Bill Murphy was presented with the Club Medal in recognition of his services to the Club in a variety of capacities including those of President and expert photographer, especially of orchids.

Lyndsay Fink is retiring from the committee tonight and I would like to acknowledge his contributions over the years. He joined the Ballarat FNC in the 1970's when Bill Murphy was President, and when Stella Bedggood was still in the Club, and has been a long-standing committee member; he edited the newsletter from 1990-93 and was Secretary from 1995-8. In November 1999 he was awarded the Club Medal in recognition of these services and the many excursions he led, especially to the Brisbane Ranges, Bamganie Forest and other areas around Meredith. He had previously belonged to Timboon FNC and had been a country member of the Melbourne club.

I'd like to thank all members of the committee for their support during the year, especially our secretary John Gregurke whose knowledge, guidance and hard work have made my job enjoyable and rewarding, and ensured the smooth running of the Club's business. We can look forward to another busy and interesting year.

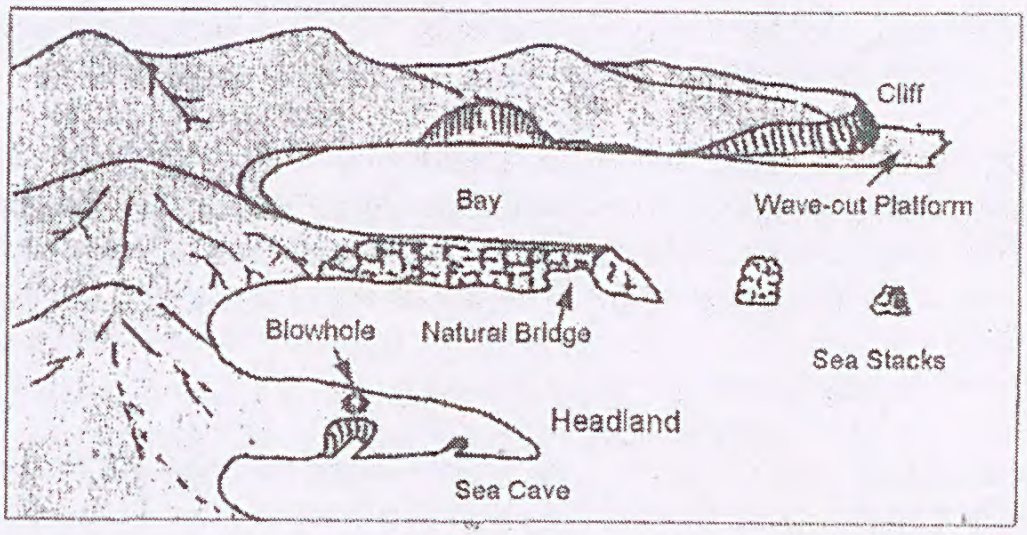
Carol Hall.

Members' Slides - *My Favourite Place in Victoria*

Each presenter showed a dozen images of localities which had a special resonance for themselves or their family. Claire and Peter Dalman reminisced about their early days in the north-east of the state with views of Bright and the nearby High Country; Ken Hammond took us along the Port Campbell coastline while Lyndsay Fink covered a wider area of coastline from Pt. Lonsdale to the Otway coast together with its hinterland. Carol Hall also looked at the Otway coast, concentrating on the delights of beachcombing with rock and sand formations, and beachwashed creatures.

Coastal erosional features typical of the Port Campbell N.P.

(Sale)



Excursion: Mt. Cole

Leaders: John Gregurke and Ken Hammond

The scent of eucalyptus from Blue Gums was noticed by club members on arriving at Richard's camping grounds in the Mt. Cole State Park. The 11,300 hectare park straddles the Great Dividing Range 25 km north-west of Beaufort. While we were having a cuppa, a black wallaby was noticed only about 15 yards away. It did not seem too concerned about the human visitors and stayed for a few minutes before moving off. Tree-martins were flying above the tall trees and Yellow Robins were feeding on the roadway. Sweet Bursaria and Tall Blue-bells were flowering.

We then walked along a track to the Glut picnic ground. Rosy Hyacinth Orchid was in flower. Despite the cool weather Common Brown butterflies were fluttering about. Bracken to 1.5 metres tall was growing amongst the tall trees. Common Heath in pink and white forms were in flower. John pointed out the Elbow Orchid *Archrochilus huntianus*. A few plants of the Mount Cole grevillea *Grevillea montis-cole* were growing alongside the track. More extensive areas of this plant were seen later in the day. This grevillea is a scrambling to semi-erect shrub with dark green deeply-lobed leaves. It has green and red flowers. Also seen was the Tall Lobelia which has an erect stem carrying several deep blue flowers growing in a one-sided raceme.

Grey Fantail
(Wilson)

Birds seen included White-throated Treecreeper, Grey Fantail, Brown-headed Honey-eater and White Cockatoo. Near the Glut picnic ground were several deep gullies with streams. Tree ferns and waterferns grew along these streams.

After lunch at the Glut picnic ground we drove to the Smith Bridge picnic area. Eastern spine-bills, White-naped and New-Holland Honey-eaters, Grey Fantails and Brown Thornbills were seen here among the yellow gums and woolly tea-trees. Travelling uphill along the Water Race road which is on the north side of the range we noticed a Wedge-tailed Eagle soaring overhead. Small areas of cleared ground have been fenced off in an experiment to study the regeneration of trees.

After travelling along the Raglan-Warrak road we arrived at the Victoria Mill picnic area. Large amounts of timber were harvested in this area between 1850 to 1890. There was a timber mill here near a stream. Tall Messmate trees surrounded the picnic area. Below them were Blackwoods and Hazel Pomaderris. Pleasant smelling Forest Mint *Mentha laxiflora* grew in the moist conditions. Also seen were *Brachyscome* sp. and Clematis.

In the Mt. Buangor State Park we walked along the Sugarloaf walking track. This steep area has large areas of lichen-covered granite rock. Large areas of Mt. Cole

Grevillea grew among the rocks. A few grevillea flowers were seen. The red styles on the flowers were still folded. Varnish Wattle, Bootlace Pimelea and Dusty Miller plants were also seen. Mt. Sturgeon and Mt. Abrupt in the southern Grampians could be seen in the west and Mt. Langi Ghiran to the north.

Les Hanrahan.

March Meeting Points

- Ballarat Bushland Book name: Further suggestions were Bush around Ballarat, Wild Places around Ballarat, Ballarat Bush Beat, Ballarat Bushland. Sub-committee to make the final decision.
- Lighting of walking track around Lake Wendouree: Committee discussion brought out the following points
  1. Is the cost of $250,000 justified and necessary?
  2. Details of the project including route, type of lighting, energy source, hours of operation and cost need to be known.
  3. Vandalism of lights may be a problem.
  4. The effect on flora and fauna needs to be investigated. Predators may increases pressure on prey.
  5. Lights should not be routed through the Fairyland area.
- Syllabus 2003-2004: Give ideas for guest speakers and excursions to President or Secretary during the year.
- Werribee Open Plains Zoo excursion: Claire Dalman explained the admission costs and facilities at Werribee Open Range Zoo. Hire of 22-seat bus would work out at $10-12. About 20 members indicated an interest in travelling by bus so hire of bus will be arranged
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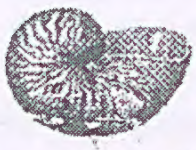
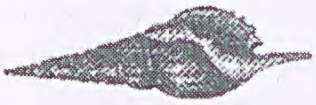
Show and Tell

- Lyndsay Fink showed the Ken Stepnell book "The Great Ocean Road" which included photographs of London Bridge and The Needle which have since collapsed.
- Allan Keeble had recently read a historic report of people becoming lost in the scrub in Carlton Gardens.

Field Reports

- Belinda Taylor: Copperhead with very bright sides on verandah at Haddon. Clouds of butterflies around buddleias in garden.
- Del McDonnell: Straw-necked Ibis feeding on garden lawns in Creswick.
- Margaret Tonkin: At Union Jack Reserve, family of White-winged Choughs very agitated by a young possum climbing tree towards their nest.

- Clare Dalman: Large flock (100) Long-billed Corella flying over Forest Street School oval.
- Helen Burgess: Possums eating leaves of rhubarb. New Holland Honeyeater seen for first time in North Ballarat garden.
- Paul Norquay: First Hyacinth Orchid flowering on Mt. Egerton block in 26 years.
- Ken Hammond: Lots of New Holland Honeyeater feeding on flowering garlic in Wendouree.
- Les Hanrahan: Darter on dam at Dunnstown.
- Carol Hall: Silvereye dive-bombed by New Holland Honeyeater while feeding in grevillea.
- John Gregurke: Crimson Rosella dominant to Red Wattlebird when feeding in tree at Anglesea.
- Avis Barlow: Masked Lapwing hatched 4 eggs on raft in dam at Lal Lal. Believed to carry chicks on back while flying to shore.
- Gayle Whyte: New Holland Honeyeater feeding on Anigozanthus at Ballarat East. Yellow-footed Antechinus drowned in pet's water bowl at Frog Hollow, Daylesford.

Apollo Bay Campout May 10-13

The Star of the Sea Convent is located at 59 Noel Street. Most bedrooms have two single beds with pillows and doonas; bring your own towel and bedlinen/sleeping bag. Each room has a washbasin and heater. Bring your own food - the kitchen is well equipped with gas hotplates and oven, fridges, freezer and microwave, crockery and cutlery. Dining-room and lounge have gas heating and are very cosy. Arrive Friday afternoon/evening and stay until Monday morning if you wish. Cost $15 per night. Talk to Claire Dalman for further details.

Subscriptions are now due for 2002-2003.

Ordinary Member	$22
Family	$36
Student	$12
Distant Member	$15 (includes newsletter)

Newsletter Postage $6 (Ordinary/Family Member—This will be the last newsletter you will receive by post unless your sub. is renewed.)

Lake Wendouree CD-ROM

More copies are available; explanatory text with an extensive collection of photos illustrates the lake's history, its lagoons, the seasonal changes, birds and plants, management and recreational uses.

Great value at $10 members, $15 non-members.

V.F.N.C.A. Camp-out, Campaspe Downs (Kyneton)

March 8th - 11th

Five members attended the camp-out for the full time, with four more attending for the Saturday only. The weather was ideal, sunny days and cool evenings. The emphasis this weekend was on geology, in the capable hands of Noel Schleiger and Julian Hollis, the practicalities of surveying fauna (by getting up early to see what the Fauna Survey Group had caught in their various traps in the Wombat Forest) and entomology with Ian Endersby. Birdos were looked after by day outings with Greg Binns and Susan Myers, while Ern Perkins demonstrated a eucalypt keying system he had developed for local species and Sharon Ford revealed the intricacies of lichens on rocks and trees.

Each evening a speaker enlarged on some aspect of the local area, such as logging in the Wombat Forest, unravelling the sequences of volcanic deposits around Trentham and the status and ecology of box-ironbark forests. We caught up with people we'd met on previous camps, had a chance to browse the variety of publications available (with excellent discounts!) and your President and Secretary had discussions with the VFNCA executive concerning our preparations for the October camp-out.

Don't Forget!

We host the VFNCA Camp-out
October 25 - 27

We will need your help!

Calendar

April

Fri. 5	Meeting: *Animals of Africa* with Andy van Smeerdijk
Sun. 7	Excursion: Werribee Open Range Zoo. Bus leaves Creswick Plaza at 9.30 am Cost $10-$12. Zoo admission $15.30, Conc. $11.40 Bring lunch, camera, binocs.
Wed. 24	Committee Meeting @ Carol Hall's, 7.30 pm.

May

Fri. 3	Meeting: Club Members - Lake Wendouree Swans; Killer Whales.
Sun. 5	Excursion: Narmbool Environmental Centre.

Supper Duty

April: Fran Hanrahan & Genny Binns **June:** Maureen Christie & ?
May: Eileen Anderson & Kay Preston

Committee

President ..... Mrs. Carol Hall

Vice-President ..... Mr. Greg Binns

Secretary ..... Mr. John Gregurke

Treasurer ..... Mr. Bob Curtain

Miss Helen Burgess.....
Miss Maureen Christie.....
Mrs. Claire Dalman.....
Mrs. Carol Hall (Editor).....
Mr. Les Hanrahan.....
Mr. John Mildren.....
Mrs. Kay Preston.....

Correspondence: PO. Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350.

Email: Secretary:
Editor:

Website: www.ballarat.yourguide.com.au Click on *Local Info.* Search *Environment.*

Meetings are held at the Ballarat Horticultare Centre, cnr. Gregory & Gillies Sts (VicRoads 254 F8) on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Depart from Creswick Plaza, Creswick Rd., Ballarat (VicRoads 255 M10) at 9.30am unless otherwise specified.

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